

## "Mini Economic Development"

Need to "spark up" your business areas? Most of the shopping districts in rural areas have buildings that have landed in the "vacated" category. Mary Kruger of Auburn, NE has started a "Mini Economic Development" project that, not only is promoting interest in the local Fine Arts talents of Southeast Nebraska, but is cleaning up the windows of vacated businesses.

Mary has been a lifelong resident of Nemaha County and has served on many committees that have resulted in improvements for the area. Observing unattractive windows that were facing our heavily traveled highways through our business districts inspired her "to do something" about it. Since Southeast Nebraska is becoming a great incubator for the Fine Arts, Mary felt this would be a great place to start. A volunteer committee has assisted Mary with coordinating the idea and they presently have 4 buildings to use for the project.

The Art teachers in the school's of Auburn, Johnson/Brock and Pawnee City have all been very cooperative in arranging their student's colorful efforts at designated times. A special display of "What Snowmen do at Night" by the Pawnee City art student's was a delightful display through the Christmas season. Deb Kubik, art teacher with the Pawnee City School, hopes to have a sequence ready for this Christmas season.

A "Pottery Workshop" was promoted this summer and we were privileged to have Nancy Fairbanks of Grand Island, NE be the instructor for the workshop. The experience of "molding and painting the clay" for the youth, and, for the adults, using the pottery wheel and being active participants in the RAKU pottery firing was well worth the \$20.00 registration fee. Three counties and almost all of the towns in Nemaha County were represented by the over 50 registrations to the workshop. All the stoneware became another attractive window display.

The emphasis for the next 30 days is a "Parade of Homes". Mary has contacted several local artists that have put their talents on canvas and captured the beauty of homes in Southeast Nebraska. Some of the homes no longer exist, and some do----but all will live forever with the likenesses caught by our inspiring artists.

Please make the effort to stop and view the displays (Highway 75, ½ block South of downtown stoplight, West side of street-and Highway 136 , ¾ block East-South side of street). There has been great cooperation and interest from business owners, local artists, and residents. This is a project that could be expanded into each and every town. It's just a small "idea" that hopefully, catches the eye of a traveler who will stop and investigate the rest of the businesses and spend a few dollars in town that we would have otherwise missed.